

# Tony Evers

**Anthony Steven Evers** (born November 5, 1951) is an American politician and educator who has served as the 46th governor of Wisconsin since January 7, 2019.<sup>[1][2]</sup> A member of the Democratic Party, Evers previously served as the Wisconsin Superintendent of Public Instruction for ten years.<sup>[3]</sup>

Born and raised in Plymouth, Wisconsin, Evers was educated at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, eventually receiving a Ph.D. After working as a schoolteacher for several years, he became a school administrator, serving as a principal and, later, district superintendent. Evers first ran for Superintendent of Public Instruction in 1993 and again in 2001, losing both elections. Evers was instead appointed deputy superintendent, a position he served in from 2001 to 2009. In 2009, he ran for Superintendent of Public Instruction again, this time winning. He was reelected twice, in 2013 and 2017.

On August 23, 2017, Evers announced his candidacy for governor of Wisconsin, challenging two-term Republican incumbent Scott Walker. Walker was seen as a vulnerable incumbent and had been criticized for his education policies. Evers won the Democratic primary in August 2018. Former state representative Mandela Barnes won the primary for lieutenant governor, becoming Evers's running mate. The pair defeated the Scott Walker-Rebecca Kleefisch ticket in the general election.

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Tony Evers



46th Governor of Wisconsin	
<b>Incumbent</b>	
<b>Assumed office</b>	
January 7, 2019	
<b>Lieutenant</b>	<a href="#">Mandela Barnes</a>
<b>Preceded by</b>	<a href="#">Scott Walker</a>
26th Superintendent of Public Instruction of Wisconsin	
<b>In office</b>	
July 6, 2009 – January 7, 2019	
<b>Governor</b>	<a href="#">Jim Doyle</a> <a href="#">Scott Walker</a>
<b>Preceded by</b>	<a href="#">Elizabeth Burmaster</a>
<b>Succeeded by</b>	<a href="#">Carolyn Stanford Taylor</a>
Personal details	
<b>Born</b>	<a href="#">Anthony Steven Evers</a> November 5, 1951 <a href="#">Plymouth, Wisconsin, U.S.</a>



In 2009 Evers used government email accounts for fundraising purposes.<sup>[13]</sup> He and another government employee were fined \$250 each for soliciting campaign donations during work hours.<sup>[14][15]</sup>

In October 2018, a divided federal appeals court found that Evers had violated neither the U.S. Constitution's Free Exercise Clause nor its Establishment Clause when he denied busing to an independent Catholic school because there was a nearby archdiocesan school.<sup>[16][17]</sup>

## Student mental health

In 2017 Evers secured increased state investment in order to increase the number of trained professionals in schools and more funding for mental health training and cross-sector collaboration.<sup>[18]</sup>

## Relations with Tribal Nations

As Superintendent, Evers worked with the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council and the federally recognized tribal nations in Wisconsin to begin an MOU process with each tribal nation to outline the working partnership the state seeks to establish and grow with each sovereign nation.<sup>[19]</sup>

## Funding formula proposal

Evers proposed the "Fair Funding for Our Future" school finance reform plan.<sup>[20]</sup> The plan sought to address some of the challenges with the Wisconsin school funding system and proposed changes to ensure equity and transparency in the quality of Wisconsin schools. Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker never included Evers's plan in his proposed state budgets, citing the cost.<sup>[21][22]</sup>

## Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

In March 2016 the United States Department of Education announced that Evers had been selected to serve on the Negotiated Rulemaking Committee for Title 1, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The federal committee was charged with drafting proposed regulations for two areas of the ESSA.<sup>[23]</sup>

## Sparsity Aid

Sparsity aid was enacted in Wisconsin based on recommendations from Evers's Rural Schools Advisory Council. The council stressed that declining enrollment and escalating fixed costs put added pressure on small, sparsely populated districts. Since it was implemented, hundreds of school districts have benefitted from sparsity aid.<sup>[24]</sup>

# Governor of Wisconsin (2019–present)

## 2018 gubernatorial campaign



Evers delivering the 2012 "State of Education Address" in the Wisconsin Capitol Rotunda

On August 23, 2017, Evers announced that he would seek the Democratic nomination for governor of Wisconsin in 2018.<sup>[25]</sup> He cited his 2017 reelection as state superintendent with over 70% of the vote, as well as his criticism of Governor Walker, as key reasons for deciding to run. Evers launched his first campaign advertisement against Walker on August 28, 2017.<sup>[26]</sup> Evers won the eight-candidate Democratic primary on August 14, 2018.<sup>[27]</sup> On November 6, 2018, Evers defeated Walker in the general election.

## Tenure

After the 2018 election, the Republican-controlled Wisconsin Legislature met in a lame-duck session and, three weeks before Evers took office, passed legislation to reduce the powers of the incoming governor and attorney general. The legislature also enacted legislation to restrict voting rights, including limits on early voting in Wisconsin and restrictions on the use of student identification cards as acceptable identification for voters. Walker signed all the legislation into law, over Evers's strong objections.<sup>[28][29]</sup> The move was "widely criticized as a power play"<sup>[28]</sup> and challenged as unconstitutional in four lawsuits variously filed by Evers, other Wisconsin Democrats, and labor unions.<sup>[30]</sup> The changes to Wisconsin voting laws were struck down by a federal court.<sup>[28]</sup>

In February 2019 Evers withdrew Wisconsin National Guard forces from the border with Mexico, where President Donald Trump had called for a "national emergency." Evers said, "There is simply not ample evidence to support the president's contention that there exists a national security crisis at our Southwestern border. Therefore, there is no justification for the ongoing presence of Wisconsin National Guard personnel at the border."<sup>[31]</sup>

In February 2019 Evers's administration prepared a budget proposal that included proposals to legalize the medical use of marijuana for patients with certain conditions, upon the recommendation from a physician or practitioner. Evers also proposed to decriminalize the possession or distribution of 25 grams or less of marijuana in Wisconsin and to repeal the requirement that users of cannabidiol obtain a physician's certification every year. Evers's marijuana proposals were opposed by Republican leaders in the Legislature.<sup>[32]</sup>

In March 2019 Evers replaced 82 appointments that Walker made in December 2018 (during the lame-duck legislative session) after a Wisconsin judge ruled that the confirmation of those appointees during the lame-duck legislative session violated the Wisconsin constitution.<sup>[33]</sup>

As of August 2019, Evers had a 54% approval rating among Wisconsin residents.<sup>[34]</sup> As of November 2019, his approval rating was 47%.<sup>[35]</sup>

## COVID-19 pandemic

On March 12, 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Evers declared a public health emergency in the state.<sup>[36]</sup> The next day, he ordered all schools in the state to close by March 18, with no possibility of reopening until at least April 6.<sup>[37]</sup> On March 17, Evers instituted a statewide ban on public gatherings of more than 10 people, following an advisory from the federal government.<sup>[38][39]</sup> This was expanded to a statewide "safer at home" on March 25, originally set to expire on April 25, with people allowed to leave their homes only for essential business and exercise.<sup>[40]</sup> A poll conducted between March 24 and 29 gave Evers an approval rating of 65%, up 14% in one month, and also showed that 76% of voters approved of his handling of the pandemic.<sup>[41]</sup>

On April 6, Evers issued an executive order to delay the state's April 7 presidential primary, as well as other coinciding elections. The move came in response to inaction by legislative Republicans to delay or otherwise modify the in-person election despite the widely perceived risk of worsening the spread of the virus if the election went ahead as planned. Evers had said on April 2 that he had no legal authority to issue such an order, and Republican leaders in the legislature used his own words against him when challenging the order in court.<sup>[42]</sup> A conservative majority on the Wisconsin Supreme Court blocked the executive order just hours after it was issued on April 6, and the election took place as scheduled on April 7.<sup>[42]</sup>

On April 16, Evers ordered an extension of the statewide lockdown to May 26, and mandated all schools in the state to remain closed through the end of the academic year.<sup>[43]</sup> The legislature promptly sued to block the order, in a case now pending before the Wisconsin Supreme Court.<sup>[44][45]</sup> Evers responded to the suit by accusing legislative Republicans of a "power grab", and said they cared more about political power than people's lives. Republicans have called the extension an "abuse of power."<sup>[46]</sup>

On April 20, Evers announced a recovery plan called the "Badger Bounce Back," laying out details of his plan for reopening Wisconsin's economy gradually as the pandemic subsides. The plan calls for daily death tolls from the virus to drop for 14 continuous days before "phase one" can be initiated.<sup>[47]</sup>

On May 13, 2020, a conservative majority on the Wisconsin Supreme Court struck down Evers's stay-at-home orders.<sup>[48]</sup>

### Shooting of Jacob Blake

On August 24, 2020, Evers deployed the Wisconsin National Guard to Kenosha following riots that occurred in the aftermath of the shooting of Jacob Blake.<sup>[49]</sup> Looting, damage and destruction to vehicles, businesses and public facilities such as some local schools, the Dinosaur Discovery Museum and a public library were reported in Kenosha during the unrest.<sup>[50][51][52]</sup> He also issued a statement denouncing the excessive use of force by police and invoking the names of African Americans killed by law enforcement.<sup>[53]</sup> Evers said, "While we do not have all of the details yet, what we know for certain is that he is not the first Black man or person to have been shot or injured or mercilessly killed at the hands of individuals in law enforcement in our state or our country."<sup>[54]</sup>

Evers also responded to the shooting by calling Wisconsin state lawmakers into a special session to pass legislation addressing police brutality.<sup>[55]</sup>

## Political positions

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Evers has said his top three priorities are improving the Wisconsin public school system, making health care more affordable, and fixing Wisconsin's roads and bridges.<sup>[56]</sup>

### Education

Evers supports directing more funding towards K-12 education and would like to work with Republicans to do more to help underperforming schools.<sup>[57]</sup> He would like to expand Pre-K education to all students and continue the freeze of the in-state tuition price for higher education.<sup>[56]</sup>

### Health care

Evers has said that Scott Walker's decisions regarding health care in Wisconsin led to higher insurance premiums for residents.<sup>[58]</sup> He has pointed out that Minnesota accepted a Medicaid expansion and has been more proactive about healthcare overall, resulting in 47% lower insurance premiums than Wisconsin's.<sup>[59]</sup> Evers supports legislation that would protect residents from being charged higher costs for health insurance due to old age or preexisting conditions. He also supports allowing children to stay on their parents' health insurance plans until the age of 26.<sup>[60]</sup> He plans to remove Wisconsin from a national lawsuit that seeks to overturn the Affordable Care Act.<sup>[56]</sup>

## Roads

Evers has cited studies showing that Wisconsin has some of the worst roads in the United States. He ran for governor on a promise to focus on improving roads and bridges, and has stated he is open to imposing a gas tax to fund the projects.<sup>[56]</sup>

## Income taxes

Evers has proposed to cut income tax by 10% for Wisconsin residents who earn less than \$100,000/year and families that earn less than \$150,000/year. He would fund this by raising taxes on manufacturers and farmers with a turnover of over \$300,000/year.<sup>[56]</sup>

## Medical marijuana

Having campaigned on his support of cannabis in Wisconsin, Evers announced in January 2019 the inclusion of medical marijuana in his state budget as a "first step" towards legalization.<sup>[61]</sup> He also indicated support for recreational marijuana legalization, but prefers a statewide referendum on the issue.

## Abortion

In April 2019 President Trump falsely claimed that Evers vetoed legislation that would prevent doctors from "executing" newborns.<sup>[62]</sup> *The New York Times* described the claim as "false", noting that Evers vetoed a Republican bill that would subject doctors to prison terms if they did not resuscitate newborns that were still alive after an abortion.<sup>[62]</sup> *The New York Times* noted that abortions after 20 weeks are extremely rare, and that infants are hardly ever born alive after an abortion attempt; doctors may, for example, induce birth when the mother's health is at risk, such as during pre-eclampsia. Under the Republican bill, the doctors would have been forced to undertake resuscitation efforts in such scenarios.<sup>[62]</sup>

## Immigration

Evers supports permitting undocumented immigrants living in Wisconsin to obtain driver's licenses, and has called this position "common sense."<sup>[63]</sup>

In December 2019, in response to Trump's executive order requiring states' consent for refugee resettlement, Evers sent the administration a letter stating that Wisconsin would accept refugees, calling them "part of the fabric of [the] state", and criticizing Trump's refugee policies as "overly cumbersome and inappropriate."<sup>[64]</sup> In February 2020, Evers sent U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo a letter to



asking him to halt negotiations with the government of Laos regarding deportations of Wisconsin's Hmong refugee population, who had previously been protected from deportation due to a long record of human rights violations in Laos.<sup>[65]</sup>

## Gun control

Evers strongly supports universal background checks for purchases of guns. He has also supported an extreme risk protection order act, commonly known as a "red flag law," which would permit loved ones or police to petition to have an individual's guns taken away if a judge deems them a risk to themselves or others.<sup>[66]</sup>

## LGBT rights

In June 2019 Evers issued an executive order to fly the rainbow flag at Wisconsin's Capitol Building for Pride month, making it the first time the rainbow flag had ever flown above the capitol.<sup>[67]</sup>

## Gerrymandering

Evers has criticized Wisconsin's legislative maps as "some of the most gerrymandered, extreme maps in the United States," citing as evidence the fact that the state legislature has opposed policies such as legalizing marijuana or expanding Medicaid in spite of polls showing a majority of Wisconsinites support both.<sup>[68]</sup> In January 2020, he created a nonpartisan redistricting commission by executive order with the intent of drawing an alternative map proposal for post-2020 census redistricting to counter the proposal the Republican-controlled legislature has said it will put forward if the issue ends up in the state's court system, as it has under past periods of divided government in Wisconsin.<sup>[69]</sup>

## Personal life

Evers is married to his high-school sweetheart, Kathy.<sup>[70]</sup> They have three adult children and seven grandchildren. Evers had esophageal cancer before undergoing intensive surgery in 2008.<sup>[71]</sup>

## Electoral history

**Superintendent of Public Instruction (2001, 2009, 2013, 2017)**



Tony and Kathy Evers

Wisconsin Superintendent of Public Instruction Election, 2001					
Party		Candidate	Votes	%	±
Primary Election, February 20, 2001 <sup>[72]</sup>					
	<u>Nonpartisan</u>	Linda Cross	58,258	23.18%	
	<u>Nonpartisan</u>	<u>Elizabeth Burmaster</u>	55,327	22.01%	
	<u>Nonpartisan</u>	Tony Evers	45,575	18.13%	
	<u>Nonpartisan</u>	Jonathan Barry	36,135	14.38%	
	<u>Nonpartisan</u>	Tom Balistreri	33,531	13.34%	
	<u>Nonpartisan</u>	Dean Gagnon	15,261	6.07%	
	<u>Nonpartisan</u>	Julie Theis	6,783	2.70%	
		<i>Scattering</i>	458	0.18%	
Total votes			251,328	100.0%	

Wisconsin Superintendent of Public Instruction Election, 2009					
Party		Candidate	Votes	%	±
Primary Election, February 17, 2009 <sup>[73]</sup>					
	<u>Nonpartisan</u>	Tony Evers	89,883	34.99%	
	<u>Nonpartisan</u>	Rose Fernandez	79,757	31.04%	
	<u>Nonpartisan</u>	Van Mobley	34,940	13.60%	
	<u>Nonpartisan</u>	Todd Price	28,927	11.26%	
	<u>Nonpartisan</u>	Lowell Holtz	22,373	8.71%	
		<i>Scattering</i>	1,431	0.18%	+0.06%
Total votes			256,909	100.0%	+7.89%
General Election, April 7, 2009 <sup>[74]</sup>					
	<u>Nonpartisan</u>	Tony Evers	439,248	57.14%	
	<u>Nonpartisan</u>	Rose Fernandez	328,511	42.74%	
		<i>Scattering</i>	905	0.12%	+0.02%
Total votes			768,664	100.0%	+6.22%

Wisconsin Superintendent of Public Instruction Election, 2013					
Party		Candidate	Votes	%	±
General Election, April 2, 2013 <sup>[75]</sup>					
	<b><u>Nonpartisan</u></b>	<b>Tony Evers (incumbent)</b>	<b>487,030</b>	<b>61.15%</b>	<b>+4.01%</b>
	<u>Nonpartisan</u>	<u>Don Pridemore</u>	308,050	38.67%	
		<i>Scattering</i>	1,431	0.18%	+0.06%
Plurality			178,980	22.47%	
Total votes			<b>796,511</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	+3.62%



Wisconsin Superintendent of Public Instruction Election, 2017					
Party		Candidate	Votes	%	±
Primary Election, February 21, 2017 <sup>[76]</sup>					
	<u>Nonpartisan</u>	Tony Evers (incumbent)	255,552	69.43%	
	<u>Nonpartisan</u>	Lowell E. Holtz	84,398	22.93%	
	<u>Nonpartisan</u>	John Humphries	27,066	7.35%	
	<u>Nonpartisan</u>	Rick Melcher (Write-in)	377	0.10%	
		<i>Scattering</i>	703	0.19%	
Total votes			368,096	100.0%	
General Election, April 4, 2017 <sup>[77]</sup>					
	<u>Nonpartisan</u>	Tony Evers (incumbent)	494,793	69.86%	+7.71%
	<u>Nonpartisan</u>	Lowell E. Holtz	212,504	30.00%	
	<u>Nonpartisan</u>	Rick Melcher	62	0.01%	
		<i>Scattering</i>	930	0.13%	-0.04%
Plurality			282,289	39.86%	+17.39%
Total votes			708,289	100.0%	-11.08%

## Wisconsin Governor (2018)

Wisconsin Gubernatorial Election, 2018					
Party		Candidate	Votes	%	±
Democratic Party Primary Election, August 14, 2018 <sup>[78][79]</sup>					
	<u>Democratic</u>	Tony Evers	225,082	41.77%	
	<u>Democratic</u>	Mahlon Mitchell	87,926	16.32%	
	<u>Democratic</u>	Kelda Roys	69,086	12.82%	
	<u>Democratic</u>	Kathleen Vinehout	44,168	8.20%	
	<u>Democratic</u>	Mike McCabe	39,885	7.40%	
	<u>Democratic</u>	Matt Flynn	31,580	5.86%	
	<u>Democratic</u>	Paul Soglin	28,158	5.23%	
	<u>Democratic</u>	Andy Gronik	6,627	1.23%	
	<u>Democratic</u>	Dana Wachs	4,216	0.78%	
	<u>Democratic</u>	Josh Pade	1,908	0.35%	
		Write-ins	221	0.04%	
Total votes			537,719	100.0%	+72.29%
General Election, November 6, 2018 <sup>[80][81]</sup>					
	<u>Democratic</u>	Tony Evers	1,324,307	49.54%	+2.95%
	<u>Republican</u>	Scott Walker (incumbent)	1,295,080	48.44%	-3.82%
	<u>Libertarian</u>	Phil Anderson	20,255	0.76%	N/A
	<u>Independent</u>	Maggie Turnbull	18,884	0.71%	N/A
	<u>Green</u>	Michael White	11,087	0.41%	N/A
	<u>Independent</u>	Arnie Enz	2,745	0.10%	N/A
		Write-ins	980	0.04%	-0.02%
Total votes			2,673,308	100.0%	+10.91%
	<u>Democratic</u> <b>gain</b> from <u>Republican</u>				

## See also

- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
- List of Superintendents of Public Instruction of Wisconsin

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## External links

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- Government website ([https://evers.wi.gov/Pages/About/About\\_Tony.aspx](https://evers.wi.gov/Pages/About/About_Tony.aspx))
- Campaign website (<https://tonyevers.com/>)
- Appearances (<https://www.c-span.org/person/?tonyevers>) on C-SPAN
- 
- Profile (<https://www.votesmart.org/candidate/112861>) at Vote Smart



Political offices		
Preceded by <b><u>Elizabeth Burmaster</u></b>	<b><u>Wisconsin Superintendent of Public Instruction</u></b> 2009–2019	Succeeded by <b><u>Carolyn Stanford Taylor</u></b>
Preceded by <b><u>Scott Walker</u></b>	<b><u>Governor of Wisconsin</u></b> 2019–present	<b>Incumbent</b>
Party political offices		
Preceded by <b><u>Mary Burke</u></b>	<b><u>Democratic nominee for Governor of Wisconsin</u></b> 2018	<b>Most recent</b>
U.S. order of precedence (ceremonial)		
Preceded by <b><u>Mike Pence</u></b> <i>as <u>Vice President</u></i>	<b><u>Order of Precedence of the United States</u></b> Within Wisconsin	Succeeded by <b><u>Mayor of city</u></b> <b>in which event is held</b>
		Succeeded by <b><u>Otherwise Nancy Pelosi</u></b> <i>as <u>Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives</u></i>
Preceded by <b><u>Kim Reynolds</u></b> <i>as <u>Governor of Iowa</u></i>	<b><u>Order of Precedence of the United States</u></b> Outside Wisconsin	Succeeded by <b><u>Gavin Newsom</u></b> <i>as <u>Governor of California</u></i>

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